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Meeting of NPA 6, Aiken Hall Champlain College, October 6, 2016

Approximately 18 people in attendance plus speakers and NPA steering Committee. Steering Committee members present: Peter Keating, Clare Wool, Charles Simpson. Videographers from Champlain College, Julia Leonard and Mathew McCardle. Clare provided snacks for the social time 6:45-7:00.

Minutes:

1. Meeting began at 7:05. Peter Keating moderated.
2. Minutes from 9/1/16 were approved as amended. That amendment was to indicate that Miriam Stoll said the expected school tax increase under Board consideration would raise taxes \$91 per year on the average house, not \$91 per month.
3. Colin McNeil, Ward Clerk for Ward 6, called for poll volunteers for election day in November. There is a small amount of pay. Applicants need to be registered voters. Contact Colin at cmcneil@mcneilbt.com Note: Phet Keomanyvanh, CEDO checked about age requirements for poll works with Clerks/Treasurer' Office and received a confirmation that 16 and 17 year olds can work as long as they are paired with another worker who is 18.
4. Miriam Stoll and Susan Marie Harrington gave a School Board update. The district earned an award under the "Let's Move Program" for scheduling at least 60 minutes of physical activity per school day per student. A Burlington teacher just won a math/science teaching award. The Board seeks to balance the needs of students, teachers, and taxpayers in the current impasse on a teacher contract. While expectations on the system are up, including to provide pre-k, federal resources continue to decrease. The Board's offer would put teacher pay in "the middle of the middle" and is fair. Teacher healthcare contributions would increase slightly and access to paid college classes for teachers would be drawn from a set pool of funds. All classes needed for continuing teacher certification would be provided or paid for. Clare Wool, speaking for the Edmunds School Parent Teacher Association, said parents were concerned with the apparent impasse and urged all parties to move forward toward a resolution. Question (Q): Students appreciate the supportive programs offered by the system but see the current situation as lose-lose. The difference is only \$200,000 which 25 new residents paying property tax would cover. Q. Professional development may be more important as an issue than salary but there's concern that the superintendent wants to offer higher salaries to attract candidates in hard-to-get teaching specialties. Answer (A): This is a small adjustment to the contract but it could make a big difference and it gives the superintendent discretion. Q. We have good people in the union and on the Board yet it took months to get the line item budget. There is an information disconnect. If the teachers' financial questions could be answered, that would go a long way to resolve this. A. That's a good suggestion.
5. Mayor Miro Weinberger on the four ballot items. Infrastructure is part of what makes the city a great place to live and comes from the investments of past generations. Examples are the breakwater, a pedestrian-only Church Street; the bike path. Now

we have to make similar investments. The first item, the 27.5 million dollar infrastructure bond, must be approved by two thirds of the voters. The need stems from the fact that 42% of the city's pipes are 75 years old or more. This subjects them to breakage, reduced pressure, and rust in the water. The bond will allow us to reline the pipes or replace them. It also covers sidewalk work and new equipment, primarily 5 or 6 fire trucks now approaching the end of their useful lives. Municipal taxes have gone down slightly in the last two years and this bond is affordable. The capital budget calls for spending \$50 million over the next five years. But sources other than the property tax are being considered: philanthropic contributions; contributions from our institutions; water use fees; raising the hotel room tax which is now 11%; an increase in the alcohol tax. A meals tax increase has been ruled out. With historically low interest rates, now is the time for this bond. We can't afford not to do it. Items 3 and 4 on the ballot relate to downtown development, specifically the overlay zoning proposal and the Tax Increment Financing proposal related to Burlington Town Center redevelopment. The BTC will generate hundreds of jobs, provide space for office workers, add vibrancy to the downtown. Downtowns are the property tax work horses. It generates \$200,000 in taxes per acre. At present, the mall pays almost \$1 million in tax. It would pay \$3.4 million after the proposed development. Greater density reduces the climate footprint for residents over suburban living. We are exploring district heating using excess heat from the McNeil power plant. That system would reduce the city's carbon footprint by 20%. The proposed BTC would mitigate storm water discharge, have a positive impact on housing needs. For this reason Champlain Housing Trust and the Vermont Interfaith Alliance endorse the project. On the negative side, there will be more shadowing, the view from the lake will change, but I see only a vast improvement. We hope to go on and upgrade other sidewalks from Church Street to Battery once those included in the mall redevelopment are improved. We get two full roads. The TIF does it all. It is not a tax increase, it robs nothing from the schools. Twenty-five percent of the taxes go to the schools from day one. Q. When do the tax resources start flowing? A. 2018 or 2019, most likely, perhaps from partly completed buildings as they are assessed. Q. Compromises? A. After two years of discussion, there's been many compromises. Gold Led certification is one. If the TIF and overlay vote fails, we are into a period of uncertainty and we go back to a declining mall.

6. Coalition for a Livable City: Steve Goodkind, Tony Redington, Monique Fordham, and Alex Levin spoke. They argued that the proposed BTC was out of scale with the city. They showed a video of the projected height and massing using the developer's dimensions and Google Earth. Tony said the first version of the Town Center conformed with Plan BTV and the present one doesn't. CLC supports all the goals the mayor outlined--vibrancy, jobs, housing--but within the present zoning. Tony said there were about 100 people in CLC ready to distribute informative leaflets about the ballot items. The present plan triples the existing by-right height. Neither the Planning Commission nor the Council's Ordinance Committee was willing to endorse it. We have had only 127 days to study the final plan of the developer, as codified in the Predevelopment Agreement. Yet it took 2 years to get to Plan BTV. We need more time. Nor is there a housing crisis of supply; 2000 units are completed or are being completed since 2013. There will be 200 affordable units at Cambrian Rise, the

former BC campus. Thus we will reach a reasonable 3% vacancy rate by the end of 2016. Steve said that CLC supports district heating but that will work whether or not we get this particular development. Tony said that there have been 6 owners of the mall averaging 7 years each and we can expect the same for Mr. Sinex. Vote 'no' on TIF and the zoning change. Steve said that there had never been a TIF given to a private developer for the construction of roads, including on Eric Farrell's Cambrian Rise project. Why for Don Sinex? This is a \$22 million gift. Steve said that we have a vision, Plan BTV. Development can correspond to it. Even if the overlay district zoning passes, there's no guarantee that the streets will be built. This is a three-story garage with a building on top, plus retail on the bottom. This is the old way of thinking. And it is a monstrosity. This could well be a model for all downtown. Parking can go underground and current zoning could allow a 105-ft building. Stay with our vision. If we want a TIF, use it for our needs. Q. I object to talk of background deals. I've been to these meetings for the last two years. This isn't a 127 day process. From the street, you don't really see the full height of buildings. A. The Planning Commission couldn't endorse this. Or the Ordinance Committee of the Council. There is no consensus. May 3, 2016 was the first public view of the project. Q. I don't trust your campaign. You said it was a 14 story mall, It isn't. Q. Sinex bought a mall, not streets. The streets weren't in his initial plan so using TIF funds is in the public interest. Q. The photos from Sinex were taken close to the base of the buildings or were aerial shots. When we asked for a model there were endless delays. Now there is a model in the library but it gives you an aerial view. A (from audience) I saw it and found it helpful. Q. In your video, the buildings are red and without windows, That's not how it will be. A. We gave a transparent view. Q. There are photos from the street level on the City's site. Q. We aren't voting on a specific proposal, rather on zoning change and so much could be altered. A. At a recent NPA, Mr. Sinex said just that but that two things wouldn't be changed: building height and the above-ground parking.

7. Lisa Kingsbury for UVM. All the projects in Ward 6, including the Alumni House, are essentially completed. We are considering a request from Ruggles House to use our shuttle system and this would require a new stop on Maple and So. Prospect. This is under consideration. Q. The Alumni House looks very nice.
8. City Councilor Karen Paul was on the agenda but due to the interest of time respectfully yielded her time for comments. She shared with the Steering Committee that she will be out of the country on November 4th but will look forward to seeing everyone at the December NPA meeting.
9. Sandy Yusen for Champlain College. Our rainbow crosswalk is complete. We will continue to address additional safety issues including educating students. Q. Will other crosswalks be treated similarly? A. That's under discussion but may require different approaches to safety. Q. Can the artist be credited? A. The idea and the execution were collective efforts.
10. Peter Keating asked for items from the floor for inclusion in the November agenda. It was suggested we seek a speaker on the problem of wind-blown trash stemming from multiple dwellings. Peter noted that at present requests have come from the fire department and the firefighters' union, from CEDO on Great Streets, from the school superintendent on maintenance issues, and from Chittenden Area Transportation Management Association (CATMA).

11. Meeting adjourned at 8:55 pm

Respectfully submitted, Charles Simpson